

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 INSE-00 ITFE-00 SSO-00

HEW-02 IO-10 AID-05 SCA-01 VO-03 DODE-00 /032 W

----- 119542

O 240845Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5486

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL UDORN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6032

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA

SUBJECT: LAO REFUGEES

REF: A) HUXTABLE-MACCALLUM TELECON 10/24/75

B) HONGKONG 12657

C) STATE 252797

D) VIENTIANE 6008

E) BANGKOK 21728

1. EMBASSY REGRETS INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY DELAY IN DISCOVERY OF THAI NATIONALITY STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS LISTED REF D, A MATTER WE BELIEVED HAD BEEN SETTLED WITH PREVIOUS CHIEF OF BANGKOK REFUGEE OFFICE MYERS. WHEN MYERS WAS PROVIDED LIST OF NINETEEN FORMER USAID LAOS FSL EMPLOYEES WHO HAD SIGNED AFFIDAVITS OF THAI NATIONALITY FOR PURPOSES OF RECEIVING FINAL PAYMENT IN U.S. DOLLARS, HE MADE TENTATIVE RULING THAT ALL WERE INELIGIBLE FOR REFUGEE STATUS. AS REF E AND PREVIOUS LISTS OF LAO REFUGEES WERE, THROUGH MISUNDERSTANDING, NOT TRANSMITTED TO VIENTIANE, WE ONLY BECAME AWARE QUESTION HAD BEEN REOPENED WHEN EMBOFF WAS SHOWN LIST IN THAILAND LAST WEEKEND.

2. THOUGH HARD INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN VIENTIANE IS
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SCANTY DUE TO EVACUATION OF MOST FSL PERSONNEL FILES,

WE BELIEVE ALL FIVE INDIVIDUALS LISTED REF D WERE BORN IN THAILAND. MRS. TESSAVONG, WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN DECLARED INELIGIBLE FOR REFUGEE STATUS, PER REF B, WAS BORN IN UBON. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, BIRTHPLACES OF OTHERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

PROMSIRI, SUKET - NAKHON PHANOM PROVINCE

KOSILA, PHET - NONGKHAI PROVINCE

MITTRI, KHAMMONE - NONGKHAI PROVINCE

NIVONGSA, VICHIAN - NONGKHAI PROVINCE

KEY POINT IN REGARD TO THESE FOUR, HOWEVER, IS THAT THEY SIGNED WRITTEN AFFIDAVITS BEFORE USG OFFICERS AS TO THEIR THAI NATIONALITY JUST THREE MONTHS AGO.

3. SOME COMMENTS CONCERNING THE GENERAL SITUATION OF OTHER QUOTE LAO REFUGEES UNQUOTE IS PROBABLY IN ORDER. THOSE BORN IN THE REGION OF THE THAI-LAO BORDER ON EITHER SIDE HAVE FOUND IT TO BE CLEARLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO BE ABLE TO CLAIM EACH CITIZENSHIP AT DIFFERENT TIMES. THUS, CONSIDERABLE EFFORT HAS, IN MANY CASES, GONE INTO THE PROCESS OF DOUBLE DOCUMENTATION. MORE THAN JUST A PHONY ID CARD IS INVOLVED - WHOLE LIFE HISTORIES HAVE BEEN CREATED. UNTIL THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW MONTHS A THAI'S OBTAINING LAO DOCUMENTATION WAS EVEN EASIER AND CHEAPER THAN A LAO'S OBTAINING THAI PAPERS. PEOPLE FROM BOTH SIDES HEDGE THEIR BETS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY. THOSE WHO HAVE SUCH LEGITIMATE CLAIMS TO THAI CITIZENSHIP AND/OR RESIDENCE ARE NOT, HOWEVER, POLITICAL REFUGEES IN ANY REAL SENSE REGARDLESS OF LENGTH AND DEVOTION OF USG SERVICE.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT LONG TERM SOLUTION IS FOR BETTER LIAISON AMONG BANGKOK, UDORN, AND VIENTIANE. PER REF A WE HAVE TENTATIVELY AGREED TO BEGIN REGULAR MEETINGS OF OFFICERS FROM EACH POST IN UDORN NEXT WEEK TO RESOLVE QUESTIONABLE CASES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, NATIONALITY, FOREIGN SERVICE LOCAL EMPLOYEES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI06032
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750370-0198
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751022/aaaaatlk.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ORM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <18 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO REFUGEES
TAGS: SREF, LA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006